control of agricultural produce to improve their marketability; prevention of distress sale immediately after harvest by providing the facility of pledge financing and marketing credit; strengthen agricultural marketing infrastructure in the country by paying the way for the introduction of a national system of warehouse receipts in respect of agricultural commodities stored in such godowns and to reverse the declining trend of investment in agriculture sector by encouraging private and cooperative sectors to invest in the creation of storage infrastructure in the country.

(c) Rural individuals, corporations, farmers, Group of farmers/growers, Partnership/Proprietary firms, Non-Government Organizations (NGO's) Self Help Groups (SHGs), Companies, Cooperatives, Federations, Agricultural Produce Marketing Committees, Marketing Boards and Agro Processing Corporations in the entire country are eligible for financial assistance under the Scheme for Construction of rural godowns. Assistance for renovation of rural godowns is, however, restricted to godowns constructed by cooperatives only.

(d) Does not arise.

NCF Recommendations on MSP

414. SHRIMATI HEMA MALINI: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware about the suggestions made by the National Commission on Farmers (NCF) to extend the Minimum Support Price (MSP) Programme to all crops to provide income security to small farmers;

(b) whether there are other suggestions also by the NCF like market risk stabilization fund jointly by State and Central Governments, expanding the scope of agricultural insurance policies etc.;

(c) whether Government are considering actively the suggestions made by the NCF to protect the small farmers; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) The National Commission on Farmers has, in its Fourth Report, recommended, *inter-alia,* that the scope of

the Minimum Support Price (MSP) programme should be expanded to cover all crops of importance to food and income security for small farmers.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) and (d) At present 25 crops of mass consumption of all India nature with fairly long shelf life and necessary for ensuring food/nutrition security are covered under the Minimum Support Price Programme. As far as horticultural and perishable agricultural commodities are concerned, their growers are provided protection from distress sales in the event of bumper crop, through the Market Intervention Scheme (MIS).

However, necessary consultation process to consider the specific recommendations made by the National Commission on Farmers has already been initiated.

Making Agriculture a remunerative profession

415. SHRI T.T.V. DHINAKARAN: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the reasons for farming becoming a loss making profession particularly for small/marginal farmers;

(b) the steps taken to make farming a remunerative profession; and

(c) whether Government would formulate a scheme to help farmers in distress to prevent them from falling in debt trap?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) Analysis of cost of cultivation data of farmers, including small/marginal, shows that in 2002-03, the gross return over all expenditures per hectare ranged from Rs. 777.85 for Jowar to Rs. 46031.34 for Sugarcane. Rising input costs, high cost of modern technology, particularly to small and marginal farmers and crop failures are some of the main reasons for fluctuations in return from farming. A Statement showing the same during 1998-1999 to 2002-03 for principal crops in the major States is enclosed (*See* below).

(b) The steps taken by the Government for making agriculture sector more vibrant and dynamic so as to increase its production and productivity with resultant increase in income of farmers include (i) ensuring the timely availability of quality inputs; (ii) promoting farmer friendly, demand driven